

module. For example, the BizPlan™ module takes revenue data and subtracts cost of sales and expense data to compute operating profit. In a preferred implementation, tax rate information is provided, and net profit may be calculated by subtracting projected taxes.

In addition, expense data from SpendCap Manager™ module may be passed to the BizPlan™ module to provide real-time data on current profitability. In addition, as the BizPlan™ module receives updated revenue information from the TopLine Planner module, revised expense and resource allocation data may be passed to the SpendCap Manager™ module, for example, to cause managers to effect cost saving measures or to reallocate resources. It should be appreciated that the financial plan for an organization can react quickly to changes in business circumstances based upon information that is as current and as reliable as possible.

The BizPlan™ module may provide separate high, medium, and low scenario forecasts for revenue, cost of goods sold, gross profit, and so forth. In addition, a model override function is available to discount available models and manually enter actual data as available. In an alternative embodiment, a BizPlan™ module may further provide projected profit and loss statements for various scenarios, providing “what-if” calculations as desired.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate, after having the benefit of this disclosure, that various modifications may be made to the specific embodiment of the invention described herein for purposes of illustration without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. The description of a preferred embodiment provided herein is intended to provide an illustration of the principles of the invention, and to teach a person skilled in the art how to practice the invention. The invention, however, is not limited to the specific embodiment described herein, but is intended to encompass all variations within the scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of financial planning, comprising the steps of:
providing a top line planner module coupled to a business plan module, for receiving inputs of external data relating to sales, marketing or manufacturing information;

exchanging revenue information between the top line planner module and the business plan module;

providing a spendcap manager module coupled to the business plan module, for providing outputs of budget information to business managers, and for receiving requests from said business managers for increased allocation of resources to be communicated to higher level decision makers for consideration;

exchanging expense information between the spendcap manager module and the business plan module;

providing a plurality of private data spaces for business managers to develop draft financial plans, wherein a private data space is accessible only to authorized individuals associated with a draft financial plan; and,

providing a public data space accessible to a plurality of business managers containing information relating to published financial plans.

2. The method of financial planning according to claim 1, wherein:
the spendcap manager module includes at least one user interfacing with at least one level in an organizational hierarchy, said at least one level associated with at least one spend account.

3. The method of financial planning according to claim 1, including;
providing an organizational hierarchy defining a plurality of departments;
associating each of said plurality of business managers with at least one of said plurality of departments; and
providing each of said plurality of business managers one of said plurality of

private data spaces for each assigned at least one of said plurality of departments to develop draft financial plans.

4. The method of financial planning according to claim 3, wherein:
the spendcap manager module includes at least one user interfacing with at least one department in said organizational hierarchy, said at least one department associated with at least one spend account.

5. The method of financial planning according to claim 4, including:
said user reporting activity of said at least one spend account to said business manager assigned said associated department; and
said business manager utilizing an assigned private data space for developing a draft financial business plan incorporating said reported spend account activity.

6. The method of financial planning according to claim 5, including:
developing objects related to activity in said at least one spend account;
monitoring said objects to determine activity in said at least one spend account; and
reporting activity from each object of said objects to said business manager for
inclusion in said draft financial business plan.

7. The method of financial planning according to claim 6, including:
finalizing said draft financial business plan and publishing same to said public data space;
and
reviewing said published financial business plan and ascertaining sufficient resources are
available for said financial business plan.

8. The method of financial planning according to claim 7 including:
receiving said budget information from said spendcap manager module for comparing
to said published financial business plan for ascertaining whether sufficient resources are
available.

9. The method of financial planning according to claim 8 including
requesting through an integrated electronically transmitted request mechanism an
increased allocation of resources when insufficient resources are available to support a
draft financial business plan.

10. The method of financial planning according to claim 7, wherein:

finalizing said draft financial business plan and publishing same to said public data space includes incorporating all spending account objects related activity for inclusion in said financial business plan prior to said publishing.

11. A financial planning system, comprising:

a top line planner module coupled to units of a business organization and operative to receive inputs therefrom of external data relating to sales, marketing or manufacturing information;

a business plan module coupled to said top line planner module and operative for exchanging revenue information therebetween;

a spendcap manager module coupled to the business plan module, operative to provide outputs of budget information to business managers and to receive requests from said business managers for increased allocation of resources to be communicated to higher level decision makers for consideration, and further operative to exchange expense information between the spendcap manager module and the business plan module;

a plurality of private data spaces integral to said spendcap manager module and operative to permit said business managers to develop draft financial plans therein, said private data space accessible only to authorized individuals associated with a draft financial plan; and,

a public data space coupled to said private data spaces and operative to receive released finalized data from said private data spaces and containing information relating to financial plans and publishing same, said public data space accessible to a plurality of business managers for review of said published data.

12. The financial planning system according to claim 11, wherein:
the spendcap manager module includes at least one user coupled to at least one level in an organizational hierarchy, said at least one level associated with at least one spend account.

13. The financial planning system according to claim 11, further including;
an organizational hierarchy defining a plurality of departments;
each of said plurality of business managers assigned at least one of said plurality of departments; and
each of said plurality of business managers further assigned one of said plurality of private data spaces for each assigned at least one of said plurality of departments to develop draft financial plans.

14. The financial planning system according to claim 13, wherein:
the spendcap manager module is further associated with at least one user assigned to at least one department in said organizational hierarchy, said at least one department further associated with at least one spend account.

15. The financial planning system according to claim 14, including:
means for creating a plurality of objects related to activity in said at least one
spend account;
an activity monitor to determine activity in said at least one spend account; and
an activity reporter for each object of said plurality of objects to report said object
activity to said business manager for inclusion in said draft financial business plan.

16. The financial planning system according to claim 15, including:
a publisher for releasing said finalized version of said draft financial business plan to said
public data space; and
means for reviewing said published financial business plan and ascertaining
sufficient resources are available for said financial business plan.

17. The financial planning system according to claim 16 including:
means coupled to receive said budget information from said spendcap manager module
to compare said budget information to said published financial business plan for ascertaining
sufficient resources are available.

18. The financial planning system according to claim 17, wherein:

said spendcap manager module includes a function to permit users to request an increased allocation of resources when insufficient resources are available to support said published financial business plan.

19. The financial planning system according to claim 18, said spendcap manager module further operative to finalize said draft financial business plan and publish same to said public data space; and

operative to incorporate all spending account objects related activity for inclusion in said financial business plan prior to said publishing.

20. The financial planning system according to claim 11, wherein said departments are preferably linked to said spendcap manager module via an internet communications link.